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(54) **Improvements in suspension struts for vehicles.**

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DE-B- 1 171 282
DE-U- 7 606 640
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FR-A- 1 122 347
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Description

This invention relates to improvements in suspension struts for vehicles of the kind in which a piston adapted to work in a cylinder is carried by a piston-rod which passes through a closure for one end of the cylinder and volumes of gas or air and hydraulic fluid under pressure are retained within the cylinder, the piston being provided with at least one valve or restrictor which permits a limited flow of hydraulic fluid past the piston in both directions in response to relative movement between the cylinder and the piston, and the volume of gas or air is adapted to support at least a part of the load on the vehicle and to accommodate fluid displaced within the cylinder by the volume of the entering piston-rod.

Suspension struts of the kind set forth may act as dampers to damp out oscillations between parts of a vehicle which are relatively movable against the loading of suspension springs. The suspension springs may be separate from such dampers, or they may be combined into assemblies with such dampers.

In suspension struts of the kind set forth it is a problem to provide a seal between the piston-rod and the cylinder which is effective to prevent the escape of the gas or air from the cylinder.

Suspension struts of the kind set forth are known from GB-A-821 030, DE-B-1 171 282 and FR-A-2 343 166. In these known struts the closure through which the piston rod extends is provided with a cylindrical extension extending axially into the cylinder and an annular chamber defined between the cylinder and the extension accommodates the whole of the volume of gas or air and a portion of the volume of hydraulic fluid, a seal through which the piston-rod works being carried by the extension at a position which is always below the level of the hydraulic fluid in the cylinder, irrespective of the position of the piston within in the cylinder. Since the volume of gas or air is trapped in the annular chamber above the level of the hydraulic fluid, the gas or air is prevented from escaping past the seal by the presence of the hydraulic fluid, and the seal is immersed in the hydraulic fluid which acts as a lubricant to reduce friction between the piston-rod and the seal.

In GB-A-821 030 the extension is integral with the closure. In DE-B-1 171 282 and FR-A-2 343 166 the closure comprises a plug and the extension is separate from the plug, separate seals being provided between the plug and the cylinder, and between the extension and the plug, respectively.

According to our invention in a suspension strut of the kind set forth the closure through which the piston-rod extends comprises a plug, and a cylindrical extension separate from the plug depends axially into the cylinder, an annular chamber defined between the cylinder and the extension accommodates the whole of the volume of gas or air and a portion of the volume of

hydraulic fluid, and a first seal through which the piston-rod works being carried by the extension at a position which is always below the level of hydraulic fluid in the cylinder, irrespective of the position of the piston within the cylinder, the extension is located against a radial shoulder on the cylinder by means of the plug, the extension is provided at a position spaced from the plug with a radial flange which co-operates with the radial shoulder, and a single annular second seal is clamped between the plug, the cylinder, the flange, and a portion of the extension which projects from the flange towards the plug.

The provision of the single annular second seal facilitates manufacture and assembly of the components of the strut.

The gas or air and the hydraulic fluid phases may be in direct contact or they may be separated by a floating piston of annular outline which is located in the annular space and carries sealing rings in its inner and outer edges for sliding sealing engagements with the extension and the cylinder at locations above the seal through which the piston rod works.

Preferably a second low pressure seal or dirt excluding member is housed in the closure adjacent to its outer end and through which the piston rod works in order to prevent the ingress of dirt and or foreign material into a space between the extension and the piston rod.

Some embodiments of our invention are illustrated in the accompanying drawings in which :

Figure 1 is a longitudinal section of a suspension strut of the mono-tube type ;

Figure 2 is a view on an enlarged scale of the upper end of the strut ;

Figure 3 is a view on an enlarged scale of the lower end of the extension ;

Figure 4 is a longitudinal section of a similar suspension strut ; and

Figure 5 is a longitudinal section of the upper portion of yet another suspension strut.

The mono-tube strut illustrated in Figures 1 to 3 of the drawings comprises a cylinder 1 in the form of a unitary cylindrical member 2 which is closed at its lower end by a closure 3 and at its upper end by a closure assembly 4. A bracket 5 fixed to the cylinder 1 at that lower end is adapted to carry a wheel (not shown).

The closure assembly 4 comprises an end plug 6 which is secured in position by a first radial rib 7 pressed inwardly from the wall of the member 2, a separate support 8 comprising a cylindrical portion 9 which depends from a radial flange 10, and an annular seal 11 clamped between adjacent faces of the plug 6 and the flange 10 by the abutment of the opposite face of the flange 10 with a second radial rib 12 spaced axially from the first rib 7. A cylindrical extension 13 of substantial length is carried by the cylindrical portion 9 from which it projects in opposite directions with the seal 11 also sealing against an upper portion 14 of

the extension which is spaced by a small distance from the plug 6.

A piston-rod 15 projects through an opening in the plug 6 and the bore of the extension 13 into the interior of the cylindrical member 2 and carries, at its lower free end, a piston 16 which, in turn, works in the bore of the cylindrical member 2. The piston-rod 15 works through an elastomeric seal 17 at the free inner end of the extension 13. The seal 17 is retained within a portion of a cylindrical retainer 18 which extends beyond the inner end of the extension 13 which is of increased diameter and the seal 17 is supported by a support ring 19 mounted between the retainer 18 and the free end of the extension 13. The support ring 19 may be of a material, such as a synthetic plastics material, suitably P.T.F.E., which has a good bearing performance, although it does not function as a bearing. The ring 19 acts to prevent extrusion of the material of the seal 17. A sealing ring 20 of elastomeric material is also housed between retainer 18 and the adjacent face of the extension 13.

The piston 16 is of known construction and is provided with oppositely acting one-way valves or restrictors.

The piston-rod 15 is secured at its upper end to a part of the chassis of frame of the vehicle.

Substantially the whole of the load on the wheel is supported by a suspension spring (not shown) which surrounds the cylindrical member 2 and abuts at its lower end against a flange 21 on the cylinder 1, and a complementary abutment on the piston rod 15. A small proportion of the load is supported by a volume of gas or air under pressure in a pressure chamber 22 within the cylinder 1 and which is defined by the annular space between the closure assembly 4, the member 2 and the extension 13. The remainder of the interior of the cylindrical member 2 is filled with hydraulic fluid to a level well above the height of the elastomeric seal 17 at the lower end of the extension 13.

Relative axial movement between the chassis or frame of the vehicle causes oscillations in the suspension spring to occur. These oscillations are damped out by relative axial movement between piston 16 and the cylindrical member 2 with the piston 16 working against the hydraulic fluid due to resistance to flow through the piston 16 by the one-way valves or restrictors in the piston 16.

The volume of the entering piston-rod 15 is accommodated by, and causes further pressurisation of, the gas or air.

Arranging for the elastomeric seal 17 to be located below the level of the hydraulic fluid ensures that the gas or air is separated from the seal 17 by the fluid. This means that the gas or air is prevented from escaping by the fluid itself.

In order to protect the seal 17 from damage by impact from the piston 16, a radial step 24 is housed in the cylindrical member 2 to limit movement of the piston 16 towards the seal 17.

In the modified construction illustrated in Fig-

ure 4 the piston-rod 15 also works through a low-pressure elastomeric seal 25 housed in the plug 6 and which acts to prevent dirt or other foreign material from entering the space between the piston-rod 15 and the extension 13.

In the suspension strut illustrated in Figure 5 of the drawings the extension 13 is clamped against the closure 6 by means of a circlip 36, and the low-pressure seal 25 is of the « wiper » type. The free inner end of the extension 13 carries a seal assembly 37 through which the piston rod 15 works. As illustrated the seal assembly 37 comprises an annular carrier 38 of a non-scuffing material, suitably nylon. The carrier 38 is formed in its outer peripheral edge with a single radial groove 39, and in its inner peripheral edge with axially spaced radial grooves 40 and 41. The groove 39 contains a sealing ring 42 of elastomeric material to form a seal against the retainer 18, which is integral with the remainder of the extension 13, and each groove 40 and 41, contains a sealing ring 43 of synthetic plastics material, suitably P.T.F.E., which is biased into sealing engagement with the rod 15 by means of a ring 44 of elastomeric material engaging between its inner face and the base of the groove 40, 41. Providing sealing rings 43 of P.T.F.E. minimises running friction.

The construction and operation of the strut of Figure 5 is the same as that of Figure 4 and corresponding reference numerals have been applied to corresponding parts.

Claims

1. A suspension strut for a vehicle in which a piston (16) adapted to work in a cylinder (2) is carried by a piston-rod (15) which passes through a closure (4) for one end of the cylinder and volumes of gas or air and hydraulic fluid under pressure are retained within the cylinder, the piston (16) being provided with at least one valve or restrictor which permits a limited flow of hydraulic fluid past the piston in both directions in response to relative movement between the cylinder and the piston, and the volume of gas or air is adapted to support at least a part of the load on the vehicle and to accommodate fluid displaced within the cylinder by the volume of the entering piston-rod, in which the closure (4) through which the piston-rod (15) extends comprises a plug, and a cylindrical extension (13) separate from the plug (6) depends axially into the cylinder, an annular chamber (22) defined between the cylinder and the extension accommodates the whole of the volume of gas or air and a portion of the volume of hydraulic fluid, and a first seal (17, 37) through which the piston-rod (15) works being carried by the extension (13) at a position which is always below the level of the hydraulic fluid in the cylinder, irrespective of the position of the piston (16) within the cylinder characterised in that the extension is located against a radial shoulder (12, 36) on the cylinder

(2) by means of the plug (6), the extension (13) is provided at a position spaced from the plug (6) with a radial flange (10) which cooperates with the radial shoulder, and a single annular second seal (11) is clamped between the plug (6), the cylinder (2), the flange (10), and a portion (14) of the extension (13) which projects from the flange (10) towards the plug (6).

2. A suspension strut as claimed in Claim 1, characterised in that the plug (6) is secured in position by means of a first radial rib (7) in the wall of the cylinder (3).

3. A suspension strut as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, characterised in that the radial shoulder comprises a second radial rib (12) in the wall of the cylinder.

4. A suspension strut as claimed in preceding Claim, characterised in that the radial shoulder comprises a circlip (36).

Patentansprüche

1. Fahrzeugfederbein, bei dem ein in einem Zylinder (2) arbeitender Kolben (16) an einer Kolbenstange (15) angebracht ist, welche durch einen Verschuß (4) des einen Endes des Zylinders hindurchgeht, und unter Druck stehende Volumen aus Gas oder Luft und hydraulischem Strömungsmittel in dem Zylinder enthalten sind, wobei der Kolben (16) mit wenigstens einem Ventil oder einer Drossel versehen ist, welches bzw. welche einen begrenzten Überstrom hydraulischer Flüssigkeit auf die jeweils andere Seite des Kolbens in beiden Richtungen entsprechend Relativbewegungen zwischen Zylinder und Kolben zuläßt, und wobei das Volumen von Gas oder Luft dazu bestimmt ist, wenigstens einen Teil der auf das Fahrzeug einwirkenden Last zu tragen und hydraulisches Strömungsmittel aufzunehmen, das im Zylinder von dem Volumen der hereinkommenden Kolbenstange verdrängt wird, wobei ferner der Verschuß (4), durch den die Kolbenstange (15) sich erstreckt, einen Stopfen aufweist und eine zylindrische Verlängerung (13) getrennt vom Stopfen (6) axial in den Zylinder hängt, wobei eine zwischen dem Zylinder und der Verlängerung gebildete ringförmige Kammer (22) das gesamte Volumen des Gases oder der Luft und einen Teil des Volumens der hydraulischen Flüssigkeit aufnimmt und eine erste Dichtung (17, 37), durch welche die Kolbenstange (15) arbeitet, auf der Verlängerung (13) in einer Position angeordnet ist, welche immer unter dem hydraulischen Strömungsmittelspiegel im Zylinder liegt, unabhängig von der Position des Kolbens (16) im Zylinder, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Verlängerung mittels des Stopfens (6) an einer radialen Schulter (12, 36) am Zylinder (2) festgelegt ist, wobei die Verlängerung (13) im Abstand vom Stopfen (6) mit einem radialen Flansch (10) versehen ist, der mit der radialen Schulter (12, 36) zusammenwirkt, und daß eine einzige ringförmige zweite Dichtung (11) zwischen dem Stopfen (6), dem Zylinder (2), dem Flansch (10) und einem Abschnitt (14) der

Verlängerung (13), welche sich vom Flansch (10) in Richtung zum Stopfen (6) erstreckt, eingeklemmt ist.

2. Federbein nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Stopfen (6) mittels einer ersten radialen Rippe (7) in der Wand des Zylinders (2) in seiner Position festgehalten ist.

3. Federbein nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die radiale Schulter eine zweite radiale Rippe (12) in der Wand des Zylinders aufweist.

4. Federbein nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die radiale Schulter einen Sprengring (36) aufweist.

Revendications

1. Jambe de suspension pour un véhicule, dans laquelle un piston (16) adapté à se déplacer dans un cylindre (2) est porté par une tige de piston (15) qui passe à travers une cloison de fermeture (4) d'une extrémité du cylindre et dans laquelle des volumes de gaz ou d'air et de fluide hydraulique sous pression sont retenus à l'intérieur du cylindre, le piston (16) étant pourvu d'une valve ou d'un étranglement au moins qui permet un écoulement limité de fluide hydraulique au-delà du piston dans les deux sens en réponse au mouvement relatif entre le cylindre et le piston, et le volume de gaz ou d'air étant adapté à supporter au moins une partie de la charge pesant sur le véhicule et à loger le fluide déplacé à l'intérieur du cylindre par le volume de la tige de piston entrante, dans laquelle la cloison de fermeture (4) à travers laquelle passe la tige de piston (15) comprend un bouchon, et un prolongement cylindrique (13), séparé du bouchon (6) s'étend axialement vers le bas dans le cylindre, une chambre annulaire (22), définie entre le cylindre et le prolongement, loge la totalité du volume de gaz ou d'air et une partie du volume de fluide hydraulique, et un premier joint (17, 37), au travers duquel passe la tige de piston (15) étant porté par le prolongement (13) en un emplacement qui est toujours situé en dessous du niveau du fluide hydraulique dans le cylindre, quelle que soit la position du piston (16) à l'intérieur du cylindre, ladite jambe étant caractérisée en ce que le prolongement est placé contre un épaulement radial (12, 36) sur le cylindre (2) au moyen du bouchon (6), ce prolongement (13) étant pourvu, en un emplacement écarté du bouchon (6), d'une bride radiale (10) qui coopère avec l'épaulement radial (12, 36) et en ce qu'un unique deuxième joint annulaire (11), est serré entre le bouchon (6), le cylindre (2), la bride (10), et une partie (14) du prolongement (13) qui fait saillie à partir de la bride (10) vers le bouchon (6).

2. Jambe de suspension selon la revendication 1, caractérisée en ce que le bouchon (6) est fixé en place au moyen d'une première nervure radiale (7) de la paroi du cylindre (3).

3. Jambe de suspension selon la revendication 1 ou 2, caractérisée en ce que l'épaulement radial

comprend une deuxième rainure radiale (12) de la paroi du cylindre.

4. Jambe de suspension selon l'une quelcon-

que des revendications précédentes, caractérisée en ce que l'épaulement radial comprend une rondelle élastique fendue ou circlip (36).

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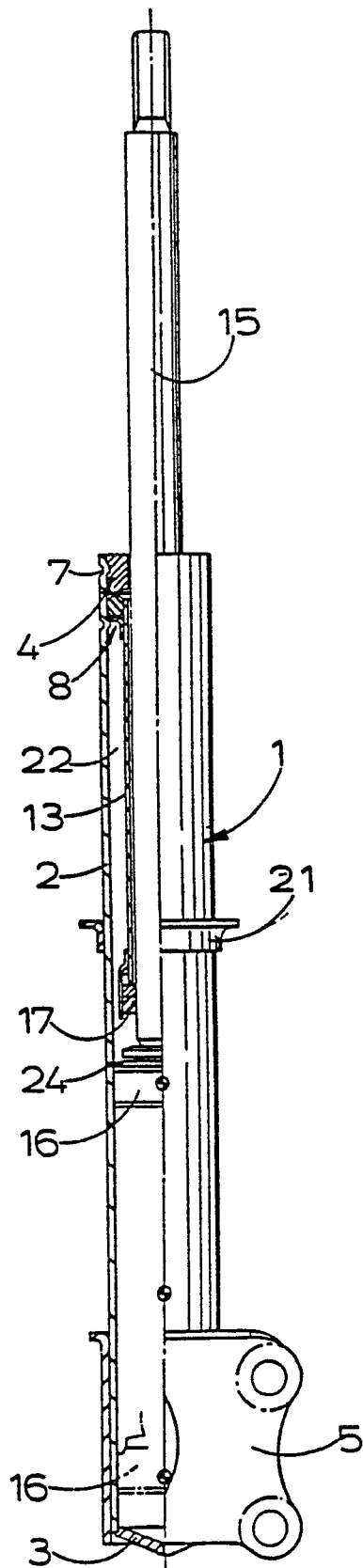


FIG. 1.

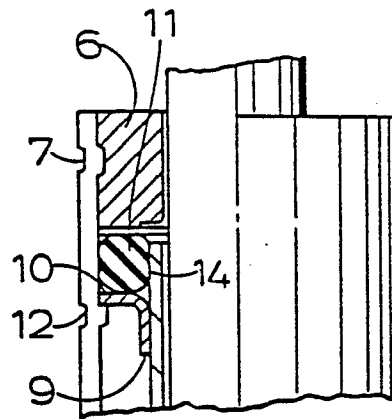


FIG. 2.

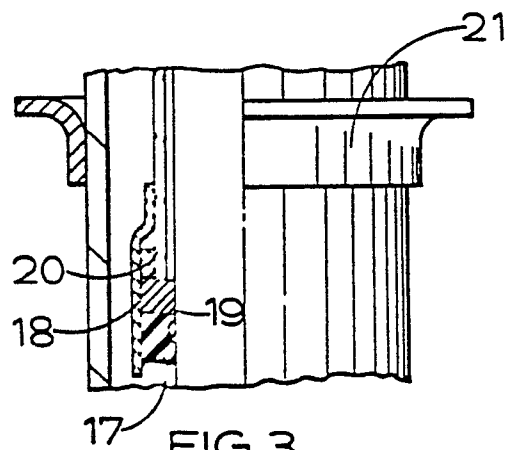


FIG. 3.

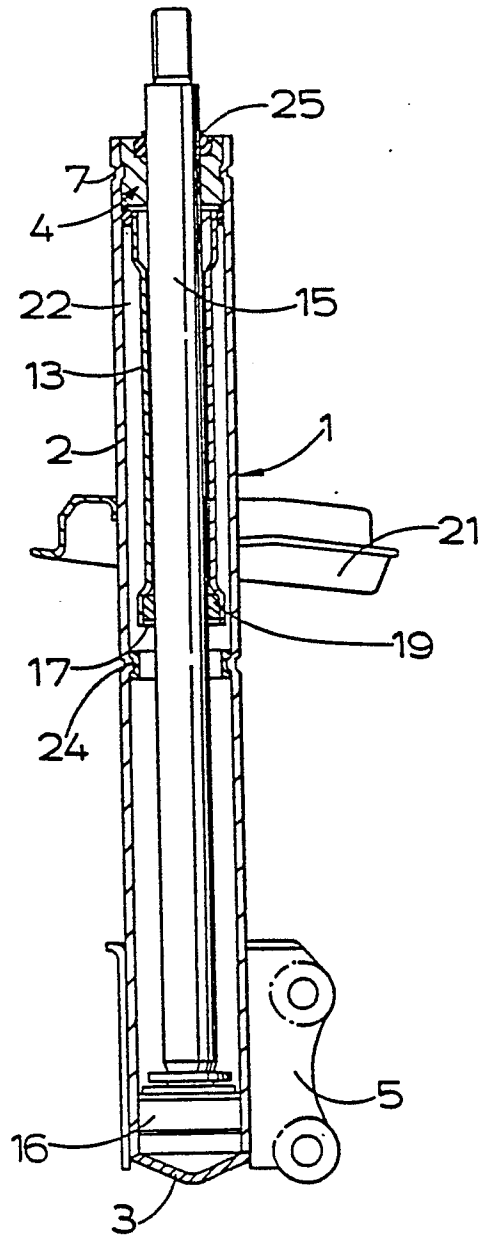


FIG. 4.

